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Matthias Pilz

**Vocational Education and Training in Times of Economic Crisis**

Lessons from Around the World

Wiesbaden: Springer VS 2017

(490 Seiten; ISBN 978-3-319-47854-8; 149,79 EUR)

This anthology emerged out of the second G.R.E.A.T. (German Research Center for Comparative Vocational Education and Training) conference held at the University of Cologne in autumn 2014. According to the well-chosen title this anthology addresses the topic of VET (vocational education and training) around the world in the global context of high youth employment, skill mismatch policies and an era of transition – all characteristics and by-products of economic crisis. It aims at examining how VET around the world responds and adjusts during times of economic crisis. The anthology is organized by six parts.

The first part compiles seven contributions under the heading international comparative studies. Madhu Singh presents alternative transitions to further learning and into the world of work for young people from less qualified and marginalized backgrounds and draws upon 33 case studies compiled by the UIL, ETF and CEDEFOP). The main focus is put on the importance of systematic, structural and institutional solutions to youth transitions in conjunction with pathways established and maintained through NQFs. Although the author presents the five pathways types well, the reader ponders whether the social/cultural problem of the social recognition/ acceptance of VET qualifications – which is outlined as the main challenge – can be solved through an institutional solution as Singh suggests.

Antje Barabasch presents findings from two studies applying a biographical perspective and focuses on the ways in which individuals draw on state resources or navigate their career without structural support in Denmark, France, Italy and Spain. Thus, the topic being dealt with here is career adaptability and the development of career management skills as essential tools for life planning. Barabasch comes to the conclusion that the different welfare approaches in the four countries lead to different planning in life as she can show how the welfare system directly affects the individual's career planning and transition. This contribution shows that the rarely chosen biographical approach gives valuable insights into the way how structures affect individual lives.

The excellent contribution by Oscar Valiente and Rosario Scandurra is on a literature review on some of the challenges and dilemmas that governments in OECD countries come across when they want to implement large-scale dual apprenticeship programmes. The main challenge is to make dual apprenticeship attractive to employers and students. Although this contribution could have had more figures for the sake of reader-friendliness, the chapter on the systematic literature which describes the process of data extraction and methodological limitations is particularly worth reading.

Valentia Barcucci, Lea Zanola and Michael Axmann draw upon the school-to-work-transition surveys conducted by the ILO in their contribution. They focus on the seven middle income countries Jamaica, Jordan, Peru, Tunisia, Ukraine, Vietnam and

Zambia and come to the conclusion that secondary VET caters poorly for the needs and interests of youth, especially females, that there is a lack of labour-market orientation and that a higher educational attainment in VET does not lead to improved labour market outcomes. As these findings are not really new, they compound earlier findings on global problems of VET.

The contribution by Náder Alyani and David Guile deals with the digitised creative sector in the Gulf. They uncover this sector's work processes and the attached learning processes for the employees. In a further step they outline educational needs for this specific sector's work processes, namely market-relevant knowledge and social capital. Furthermore, their study contributes to policy design as it developed an analytical model for learning and innovation processes in the digitised creative sector. As digital work will increase immensely throughout the next years, studies like these are much needed.

The penultimate contribution of this first part is by Marthe Geiben and Philipp Grollmann, who address the topic of induction of job entrants with midlevel qualifications in health care and car service in Germany, UK, Spain, Finland and South Korea. They present findings from the INDUCT study and thus give a valuable insight into the link between VET and employers' strategy to hire job entrants. In the light of all their findings they reach the crucial conclusion that each pattern of organising education and work is a solution in its own right questioning European attempts to standardise the minimum educational level.

Lorenz Lassnigg provides the last contribution in this first part. He looks into the special characteristics of the Austrian apprenticeship and its generalizability for Germany and Switzerland. His findings show that the apprenticeship system and the transition patterns are substantially different in the three countries, which on first sight looks so similar. Furthermore, he is able to show that apprenticeship does not automatically lead to a lower youth employment.

The second part compiles four papers under the heading Asia (Including India and Excluding China). The first contribution is by S. Nayana Tara and N.S. Sanath Kumar and they present results from a study on centres of excellence in industrial training institutes in the southern Indian state Karnataka. This well-written paper gives a vivid description on the challenges students and teachers have to face in this specific VET programme on the micro, meso and macro level.

Thomas Schröder presents in his contribution the non-profit organization RAVTE (Regional Association for Vocational Teacher Education in Asia), which is a civil organization with 25 member universities and institutions from East and Southeast Asia. RAVTE has the goal to support the regionalization processes with respect to VTE and TVET. The policy of transferable skills in TVET and VTE and the degree of its implementation in the Kingdom of Thailand is the topic of Nonthalee Prontadavit's and Sirilak Hanvatananukul's paper. They analyse the current situation on the national, institutional and instructor level and present measures to increase the implementation of transferable skills on these three levels.

The last contribution in this second part is by Faruque A. Haolader, Khan Md. Foysool and Che Kum Clement who give a thorough description of TVET in Bangladesh. Next to the TVET system itself they address the following topics: curricula, teachers'

qualification, current initiatives to enhance relevance of TVET and promote enrolment and female participation. Using data which was collected through secondary research they conclude by presenting measures for improving TVET in Bangladesh.

VET and TVET in China is the focus in the third part of this anthology, which is made up by four papers. Zhiqun Zhao, Zhixin Zhang and Felix Rauner report in their contribution about the usefulness of the KOMET competence assessment concept for Chinese VET teachers. As the continuing professional development of Chinese VET teachers is insufficient and thus one of the major problems of the VET system in China, the KOMET assessments were used to determine the levels and features of the professional competence of VET teachers, and analyse the factors affecting the development of their professional competence. The worthwhile article by Jun Li is about what it means to be a vocational teacher in China. By conducting an online survey and in-depth interviews in east, south, middle China it was possible to reconstruct what Chinese vocational teacher think of their profession and what factors influence their professional development. The low status of VET and the questionable professional title system are two of many challenges for Chinese VET teachers. Ni Tang and Weiping Shi address the topic of youth unemployment in China with simultaneously shortage of skilled workers. In their paper they present structural crisis of the Chinese labour market and the government's efforts to reduce youth employment by implementing VET policies.

The last contribution of this third part is by Zhen He, Liangcai Xie and Yuzhu Li and addresses the school-enterprise cooperation (SEC) in China. By applying a questionnaire and interview methods to principals and vice principals of VET colleges and human resource managers of enterprises, the authors tried to answer the question: what institutional conditions lay behind the obstacles to SEC, and what possible innovations might exist for TVET institutions? Four factors had been discovered: shortage of funding, reliance upon only a single financing provider, lagging reform in qualification certification systems, and low status of skilled workers. The authors point out that according to institutional complementation theory, the development of SEC depends on the establishment and improvement of all relevant complementary systems.

The fourth part of this anthology focuses on VET in the USA. Robert I. Lerman examines the factors that influence firms in respect to providing training-apprenticeships or not. A number of research questions are addressed; one focus is on the role of human capital theory as an explanatory model for firms offering training. In addition Lerman carves out key components for firms to offer training. Christopher Zirkle presents a very informative and concise paper. His contribution is a qualitative analysis of High School level Vocational Education of the last three decades. Zirkle describes a number of changes, e.g. curriculum (career clusters), teacher quality and the value of VET, but also remaining challenges such as funding and career awareness. However, it seems that the negative image and public perception of VET is still the largest barrier – the symbolic change of name from Vocational Education to career and technical education has not yet succeeded in breaking up the cultural barrier.

Europe is the topic of the fifth part of this anthology consisting of five papers. Philipp Gonon presents a well-written paper about the Swiss vocational education and quality demands as a driving force in improving the system. He applies a multi-

dimensional understanding of quality and illustrates how quality-driven reforms in combination with consensus have led to a successful vocational education system. This paper is followed by an excellent contribution by Aurora Lopez Fogues who uses the innovative Capability Approach to explain the skill mismatch in Spain. This very enlightening approach does also explain why a (partial) transfer of the German dual VET system does not work for Spain. Tim Grebe and Stefan Ekert discuss in their well-structured and concise contribution the training module concept for the German VET system and its tested selective implementation through the Jobstarter Connect programme.

Differences and similarities in business and administration occupations is the topic of Franz Kaiser's, Silvia Annen's and Michael Tiemann's article. Besides interesting discoveries in respect to the historical development of these occupations, the authors suggest the development of key curricula for all business and administration occupations as they share many similarities. Sabrina Berg addresses the sad truth of the reproduction of social inequalities in the case of economic education in vocational schools in her paper. She shows that students' financial literacy is strongly related to their parents' occupations and type of occupation, which affects the process of teaching and learning. Reflexive pedagogy is discussed as one strategy for teachers.

The sixth and last part of this anthology is entitled as Theoretical/Conceptual. Jim Hordern has contributed the first paper and deals with the constitution of vocational knowledge, and the development of an analytical framework by using Bernstein's concept of region that seeks to identify and characterise how that knowledge is constituted. TVET policy transfer is Stefan Wolf's topic as he illustrates how the approaches work culture and stages in policy borrowing in education are useful tools when transferring TVET from Germany to Egypt. In addition, Wolf points out the many points of needed further development and research. Lorna Unwin argues in her contribution for the dire need for focusing on work in order to inform the theories of the purpose and nature of VET, which will enable VET to support skill formation. The last contribution is by Matthias Pilz, who presents in a concise way the innovative analytical tool '6 P strategy', which integrates the macro, meso and micro level of VET. The tool can be used to categorise individual countries in terms of the way VET is perceived and designed within the specific socio-cultural context. Pilz points out that the tool is not 'a finished product' but open for further additions.

This anthology on vocational education and training in economic crisis is well-compiled. Not only are different countries, even continents taken into consideration but a broad variety of facets are addressed in a systematic way, so that the reader does not lose herself/himself in the vast amount of different facets but gets an valuable overview of the current aspects discussed.

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